

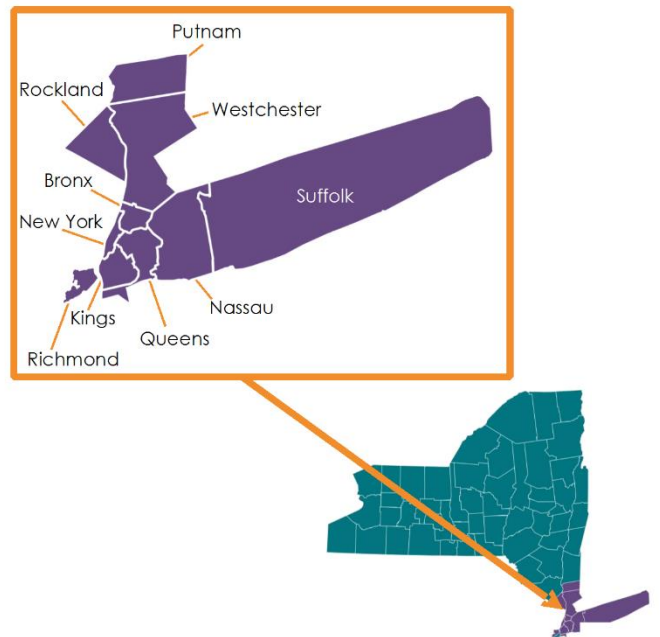
NEW YORK CITY GAY & LESBIAN ANTI-VIOLENCE PROJECT

**2023 – 2024
Report**

OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

The New York City Anti-Violence Project’s (AVP) Department of Legal Services provides free holistic, direct legal services to underserved LGBTQ and HIV-affected survivors of violence in all five of New York City’s boroughs. The Legal Department is co-located with AVP’s existing Client Services Department, which provides direct social services. This co-location model is intentional and evidence-based, allowing our clients - who are all low-income survivors of violence - to receive the critical social services they need along with the necessary legal services. This model has also proven to increase the number of clients successfully engaging with legal services because their needs are met comprehensively in one location. Ease of comprehensive service delivery is especially important for those who are already vulnerable due to their identities, age, disability status, or income level, such as under resourced LGBTQ and HIV-affected New Yorkers.

AVP has a demonstrated track record of successfully tailoring programs and expanding outreach to engage and foster the leadership of the most marginalized members of the LGBTQ community, in particular HIV-affected people, low-income people of color, transgender women of color, and immigrants. LGBTQ people living with HIV experience an increased rate of violence based on the intersections of their marginalized identities. A majority of AVP’s clients identify as people of color (80%), and over 20% of them identified as Transgender, or Gender Non-Conforming (TGNC). When LGBTQ people living with HIV reach out for support, they are often met with bias, discrimination, and violence. AVP is deeply trusted within marginalized LGBTQ and HIV-affected communities, especially communities of color. Because of AVP’s unique presence within the community, and strong reputation as an inclusive space, AVP is often able to reach



Service Area: New York City Metropolitan Area

Population Served: General Low-Income Population

Staffing Full Time Equivalents:
 Total Staff: 6 Lawyers: 4
 Paralegals: 2

communities with direct services that other service organizations and clinics are unable to.

For many AVP clients, interaction with the legal and criminal justice system is a byproduct of their experience with violence. Many clients come to AVP with multiple legal issues that other legal services providers are unable or unwilling to handle together. AVP's unique expertise in LGBTQ-focused, holistic, trauma-informed, and culturally specific legal services makes it a one-stop destination for LGBTQ survivors of violence with legal needs.

In response to community need, the Legal Department offers intake, advice, and representation in multiple issue areas, including:

- **Family Law:** orders of protection, child/spousal support, child custody, divorce;
- **Public Benefits:** representation to those who have been denied or improperly terminated from SNAP, cash assistance or rental assistance;
- **Immigration:** affirmative and defensive asylum, U & T Visas, VAWA self-petitions, work authorization, adjustment of status and naturalization;
- **Housing:** eviction and HP proceedings;
- **Legal Name and ID Document changes:** civil Court name change for transgender and gender non-conforming survivors and associated name and gender marker changes on ID documents (Social Security Card, NYS birth certificates, state identification, etc.);
- **Criminal Court:** representation of complaining witnesses in criminal court (AVP does not do criminal defense work).

In FY 2023, AVP's Legal Department worked with 109 individual clients (new and on-going clients) who had 198 separate legal cases. A total of 113 legal cases remain open entering the new fiscal year and 80 legal cases were closed in FY23. Due to our legal representation, those 80 people achieved a legal benefit in one of AVP's practice areas (see Section C. Case Benefit Detail). The number of clients we were able to help in FY23 was slightly lower than FY22. The legal department's two staff attorneys left for new jobs in the summer of 2023. We went about 4 months without staff attorneys, where the Legal Director and Deputy Director covered all cases while we were hiring. We were able to hire two new staff attorneys in December of 2023, and hope to reopen intakes in June of this year.

DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES

Carlos – Immigration (all client names have been changed for privacy): AVP's legal team won asylum for a long-time legal client, Carlos. His story of persecution was incredibly moving. Carlos crossed the border on foot from Mexico as soon as he was able to after his Father and relatives had attempted to murder him for his sexual identity. When he arrived, he made his way slowly to New York City, where he heard about AVP. AVP took on his asylum claim, thinking it was very straightforward given his story.

Despite his complex story of bravery and persecution, ICE would not stipulate to his history of persecution and the case had to be litigated. Many other legal aid organizations would then transfer a complex case like this that needed to go to trial. AVP's legal team knew that it was the best equipped to help Carlos, given his sexual identity. The Legal Team, prepared for weeks for trial. And after days of an intense, complex, and adversarial trial, our team was victorious for our client!

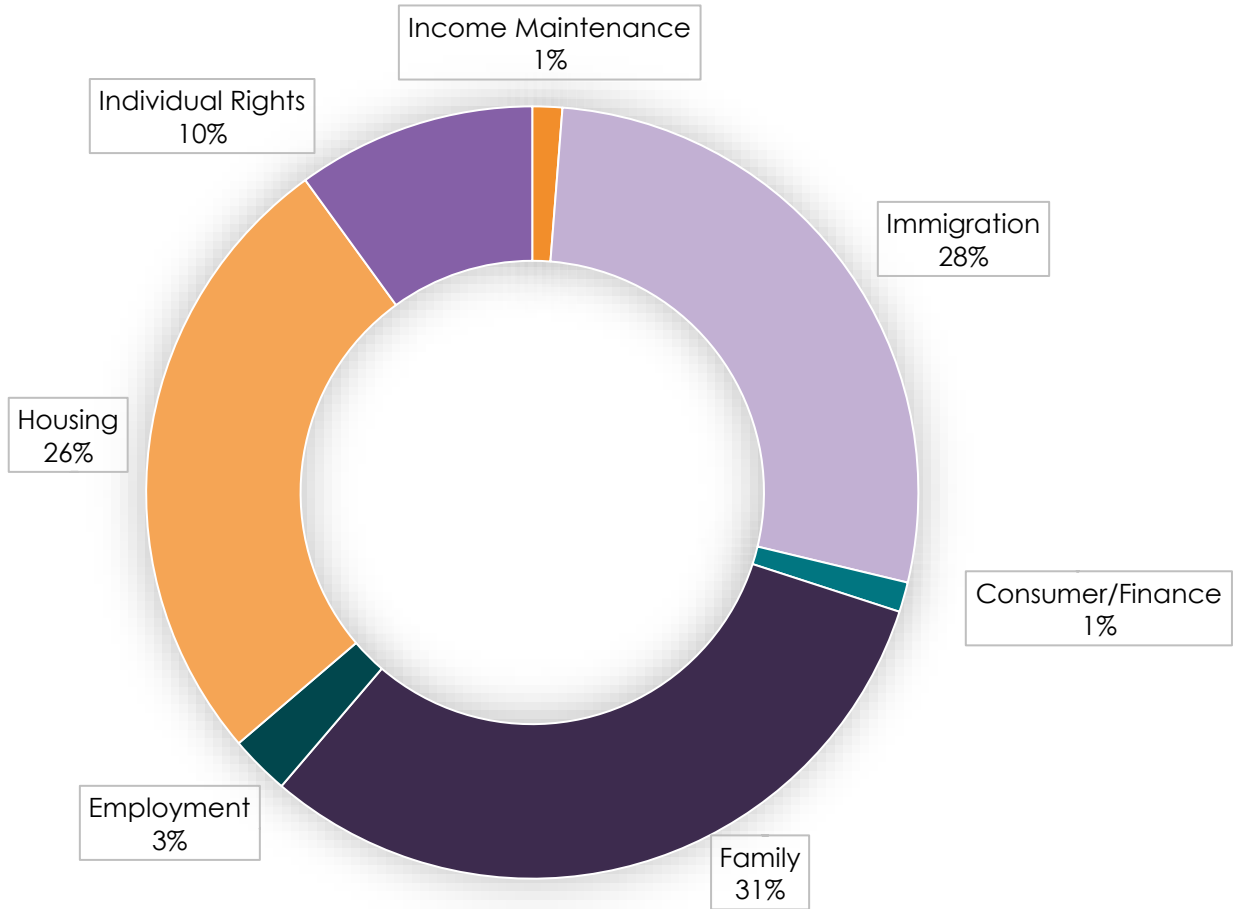
Tiffany – Housing: Another client, Tiffany, who identifies as queer and disabled, came to us for assistance with a housing case. This client was facing immediate eviction as well as a lawsuit demanding payment in arrears. Our attorneys worked diligently to defend her case, gathering documents and evidence, then filing to issue a stay on the eviction and to reduce the amount in arrears owed to the landlord.

Our attorneys represented the client in housing court and successfully reached a settlement with opposing counsel that kept the client housed and cut the amount of arrears in half. Additionally, our attorneys worked with Adult Protective Services (APS) and the client's social worker to secure new housing for her.

AVP attorneys successfully prevented the client from facing an unjust eviction proceeding, greatly reduced the amount she owed to her prior landlord, and kept her from being unhoused.



CASES BY LEGAL PROBLEM AREA



CASE EXAMPLES CONTINUED

They played a large role in securing a new place of living and worked with other government agencies to ensure the client ended up in a much better, more stable position than she was prior to her representation with AVP. This client reached out with a thank you note after she moved into her new apartment.

OTHER LEGAL-RELATED SERVICES

AVP’s legal services department conducts targeted outreach to community members on its own and in conjunction with our Community Outreach and Policy Advocacy (COPA) department. AVP offers LGBTQ-specific outreach materials to survivors in person (e.g. LGBTQ-specific health care organizations, events, venues, and gathering places) and virtually (e.g. via social media, and our expanded virtual programming developed in response to COVID-19). AVP’s Communications team engages community members via social media, including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, as research shows that providing destigmatized information can engage hard-to-reach TGNC people in necessary care.

Additionally, we provide information and education to the community in mainstream spaces, like in all NYC Family Justice Centers, in law enforcement precincts, court buildings, and the offices of community partners and elected officials. AVP staff are adept using the many diverse terms that LGBTQ people use to describe themselves and their relationships.

This fiscal year, Legal Department staff presented trainings to both community members and other professionals on a variety of topics, including LGBTQ 101; Legal Issue Spotting; Housing Law; and Asylum for LGBTQ People. Legal Department trainings, presentations, and outreach reached 119 people this fiscal year. Twenty-five of these people were at in-person presentations to community groups, and 94 attended interactive online presentations.

30

people benefited from **Pro Se Assistance**

119

people benefited from **Community Legal Education**

174

people benefited from **Web-Based Assistance**

TECHNOLOGY

Currently, AVP is in the last building phase of our new Salesforce legal database. Our information has been migrated, and we are working on organizing the data and fine tuning the program to what we need it to be. Salesforce will allow the Legal department to modernize and streamline its case management capabilities and will allow all of the departments to collaborate, while maintaining the same firewalls between departments regarding the confidentiality of client information.

IOLA TECHNOLOGY GRANT

AVP used the generously offered technology grant to pay Idlewild (our IT provider for the Salesforce build) to cover part of Salesforce Implementation costs. Funds from this grant were utilized to support AVP's work of bringing all programmatic departments into a single database, Salesforce, which will become the record-keeping software for all of AVP Programs, enabling us to create more effective and efficient tracking and engagement across departments. AVP would not have been able to support the IT costs, and may have had to pause on the build, without this grant.

Last year, we completed the Discovery and Design phases of the Salesforce implementation project, with the support of Idlewild, the consulting firm working with AVP to design Salesforce for Programs. During Discovery, Idlewild completed interviews and review of requirements with our internal committee, Salesforce Implementation Team, MTeam members, and the Executive team. Based on what was learned in Discovery, Idlewild designed the database in Salesforce, and began developing the systems, beginning with the Legal Department.

PRO BONO VOLUNTEERS

AVP partners with corporate law firms whose attorneys provide pro bono representation to our clients with immigration matters, legal name changes, and more. Client's cases have been placed with Proskauer, Cravath, Bloomberg, and Cooley. Additionally, we partner with firms to assist in providing trainings, as well as sponsoring legal clinics for LGBTQ survivors of violence. For example, Cadawalter sponsored a legal clinic this past June and paid for clients'

name change filing fees. AVP's Legal Department is currently engaged with 10 corporate law firms, with 21 individual attorney volunteers – most corporate attorney volunteers have at least two or more attorneys working in each case. AVP has 13 individual cases, mostly asylum, placed with pro bono attorneys. These cases tend to stay open for over five years on average. None of the cases closed this fiscal year.

The Director of Legal Services is hoping to ramp up pro bono recruitment this coming fiscal year, but the number of volunteers remains steady. Right now, AVP has no method to track pro bono service hours in Salesforce, but we provided a number based on the estimates above (150 hours per case as a rough professional estimate multiplied by each pro bono volunteer). AVP has hosted law student interns consistently since its inception in 2013. For example, since 2015, NYU Law School's LGBT Rights Externship has placed a law student for the Spring semester with AVP. Additionally, each summer and fall 1-2 summer law school interns are hired. The law students draft legal memos and court documents, complete extensive research, complete legal intakes, and shadow the attorneys in court proceedings.

AVP has also consistently hosted Pro Bono Scholars from area law schools, most recently from Fordham Law. This program allows those who have excelled in law school and have an interest in practicing non-profit law to work with a non-profit organization in their last semester of law school, after sitting for the February NYS bar exam. These Scholars work closely with the attorneys to learn all aspects of practicing non-profit law. They draft court pleadings, conduct legal research, interview clients, and prepare cases under strict supervision. We track these hours based on the amount of hours worked each week for the duration of the internship (about 10 weeks).

21attorneys volunteered **3,150** hours**2**law students volunteered **640** hours

SIGNIFICANT COLLABORATIONS

AVP has historically worked in collaboration with social and legal service providers, bar organizations, law firms, and other community groups. AVP’s Legal Services Department continues this tradition and has expanded the number of partner organizations. For example, the Director of Legal Services also partnered on the LGBTQ Endorsement Pilot Program through the New York Office of Domestic Violence (OPDV). This program works with domestic violence shelters across the state of New York to train them, and then endorse them, on best practices for working with LGBTQ survivors of violence. AVP’s Legal Director is also on the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office TGNCNB Working Group, Sexual Violence Working Group, and an NYPD Training Review Committee. All initiatives will result in actions being taken that further AVP’s mission of service LGBTQ survivors of violence.

AVP's Legal Department also understands the importance of working with students and law schools to help shape the next generation of lawyers. AVP most recently hosted a Pro Bono Scholar from Fordham Law School from February to May 2024. We have a new intern a a new attorney volunteer starting in June of 2024. This will allow us to take on more new intakes soon.

CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES FUNDING

\$ 532,294.00

City and County	\$ 266,436.00
IOLA Funding	\$ 135,000.00
State Funding	\$ 130,858.00

